

BUCKLEY TOWN COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

COMPLAINTS POLICY OF BUCKLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Buckley Town Council views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Buckley Town Council's policy is:-

- a) To provide a fair Complaints Procedure which is clear and simple to follow, for anyone wishing to complain.
- b) To publicise the existence of our Complaints Procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- c) To make sure everyone at Buckley Town Council knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- d) To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- e) To make sure that all complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- f) To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Buckley Town Council.

This Policy and Procedure is not designed to be used for the day to day contact by individuals who, or organisations which, may have concerns to express. Those concerns can be dealt with at the time. This Policy and Procedure is designed to deal with formal complaints.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person who, or organisation which, has a legitimate interest in Buckley Town Council or resides in or carries on business in Buckley.

A complaint can be received verbally, by telephone, by e-mail, in writing or by any other electronic means.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this Policy and its implementation lies with the Town Council of Buckley.

Review

This Policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on

Last reviewed

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE OF BUCKLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to Buckley Town Council at The Council Offices, Mold Road, Buckley Flintshire CH7 2JB or by e-mail at tjr@buckleytc.org.uk.

Verbal complaints may be made by telephone to 01244 544540, or in person at the above address to any of Buckley Town Council's staff, or at any of our events or activities.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded.

The person who receives a telephone or in person complaint should:

- a) Write down the facts of the complaint.
- b) Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number.
- c) Note the relationship of the complainant to Buckley Town Council (for example, resident, business owner or Member)
- d) Tell the complainant that the Town Council has a Complaints Procedure.
- e) Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take.
- f) Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by e-mail so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see APPENDIX 1.

Every effort should be made to resolve the complaint at Stage One below.

Resolving Complaints

STAGE ONE

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so, if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be recorded in the Complaints Log within one week. If the complaint has not been resolved the Town Clerk and Financial Officer should delegate the complaint to someone sufficiently skilled to investigate it and take appropriate action, informing The Town Clerk and Financial Officer of the outcome.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within 5 working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this Complaints Procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 4 working weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether or not the complaint is justified, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

STAGE TWO

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed by a Council Sub Committee specifically set up for the purpose of reviewing unresolved complaints. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chair of the above Sub Committee.

The request for Council Sub Committee review must be put in writing to the Town Clerk & Financial Officer, providing full details of the dissatisfaction and should be acknowledged within five working days of the Town Clerk & Financial Officer receiving it. The acknowledgement should say how the matter will be dealt with and when the complainant can expect a reply.

If the complaint relates to a specific person they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

In normal circumstances, the Town Clerk & Financial Officer will be the link Officer between the complainant and the Council Sub Committee.

Following any Council Sub Committee meeting, the complainant should receive a definitive response within four working weeks. If this is not possible, progress reports should be provided.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the actions taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Variation of the Council Complaints Procedure

Buckley Town Council may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid conflicts of interest or personal/prejudicial interests in relation to any given Member(s).

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

The Complaints Policy and Procedure and any complaints received will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and any amendments required to the Policy and Procedure will be placed before the relevant Committee for its approval.

APPENDIX 1 – PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR HANDLING VERBAL COMPLAINTS

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation.
- Listen – allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to ‘sound off’.
- Don’t debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry.
- Show an interest in what is being said.
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details.
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary.
- Show that you understand the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down.
- Acknowledge the person’s feelings (even if you feel they are being unreasonable) – you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the Town Council.
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of the Town Council, then apologise.
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue.
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don’t promise the undeliverable.
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met.
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told.
- Where appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review.